

chimney. That house was "designed in the 18th Century Virginia style."⁵⁹ That Grigg's investigation and research turned up an original design for Ramsay House that is so similar to published mid-twentieth century residential buildings done in an eighteenth-century mode is nothing short of miraculous. [Illustration #8]



Illus. #8--Ramsay House look-alike in Belle Haven, Fairfax County, designed by Milton Grigg in 1936. Source: American Architect and Architecture, 1936

By the time that the general contractors had finished implementing Grigg's design for the Ramsay House in the 1950s, little original fabric was left. The 1942 fire had destroyed original materials and Grigg's destructive testing in the spring of

⁵⁹ "House of Richard B. English, Belle Haven, Alexandria, Virginia, Milton L. Grigg, Architect", American Architect and Architecture, June 1936, p.81. I am grateful to John Burns, AIA, of the Historic American Building Survey for bringing this reference to my attention.

1946 resulted in the removal of much of the existing plaster work on the walls and ceiling as well as floor boards and joists. What remained was subjected to repeated vandalism during the period 1946 to 1950 when the building was vacant and essentially open to the elements. Thus, by the time that the reconstruction work began in November of 1950 the building was essentially rebuilt on what was perceived to be the historic footprint. For example, wall studs are all new 2 x 4s, ceiling joists are also new 2x lumber, the floors are new as are the roof joists and the roof itself, except for a small section of 18th century siding under the porch all of the siding is new, all of the plaster work is new, the porch is new as is the chimney on the south side as well as the English bond brick foundation.

Grigg's revised 1955 working drawings for the building do not indicate re-use of any historic materials. Indeed, Grigg's 1955 written material specifications for the reconstruction call for the use of entirely new material for every phase of the project. The words renovate, fix, clean up, rehabilitate do not appear in the document. The only element of the building that the contractor was told to reuse were the existing shutters which were not original to the house.⁶⁰ The Historic American Building Survey drawings of 1936 note that the shutters are "not original." The framing for a number of windows on the west side of the building is original eighteenth century building fabric.⁶¹ Everything else in the building is new and Grigg's plans were detailed to the point that he had full size section drawings of such things as crown molding, profiles of the fireplace mantles and molding as well as the stair rail. It is not known if the rubble stone foundation re-uses stones from the original foundation.

Additionally, the garden is a fanciful creation that does not attempt to claim historical precedents. While the intention may have been the laudable goal of "restoring" the building in the mid-1940s, by the time the project reached fruition in 1955 and 1956 it was an all new building that tried to give the impression of a late eighteenth century house.

APPENDIX

Two of the Alexandria architects associated with the preservation and reconstruction of Ramsay House, Milton Grigg and Thomas Waterman, were hugely influential in establishing restoration architecture as a legitimate part of the practice of architecture in the middle of the 20th century. They had worked

⁶⁰ Ramsay House specifications included in the Papers of Milton L. Grigg in Special Collections, Alderman Library, University of Virginia.

⁶¹ While not noted in the Grigg documents, the window framing system was observed in 1994 when the building was resided.

together as part of the original team of architects that designed the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in the late 1920s and early 1930s. When Rockefeller disbanded the Williamsburg architectural office in 1933 because he believed that the work was complete, both Grigg and Waterman went into private practice and ended up in Alexandria. Here they became involved with the preservation of some of the City's most revered local landmarks including the Stabler-Leabear Apothecary Shop and Gadsby's Tavern in addition to Ramsay House. In their work here they brought to bear a distinct Williamsburg approach to treating historic buildings that had been learned in the early years of their work at Colonial Williamsburg.

MILTON LATOUR GRIGG, 1905-1982⁶²

Grigg was an Alexandria native who was born in the Del Ray section of the city. He received his architecture degree from the University of Virginia in 1929 and almost immediately began work as part of the original architectural team working on the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. When the architectural staff was disbanded in 1933, Grigg established his own architectural firm where he continued to practice until his retirement in 1980. The main office for his firm was in Charlottesville, although for approximately forty years Grigg maintained a satellite office in Alexandria, first on Prince Street and later on Stevenson Avenue. Of the original Williamsburg architects who worked in Alexandria, Milton Grigg subsequently did the most work in the city.

His preservation and restoration work drew heavily on his experiences at the Williamsburg restoration. In the 1930s Grigg was the restoration architect for Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home in Charlottesville.⁶³ In Alexandria his restoration work included Gadsby's Tavern in the period 1932-1934 for which he did "paint research and decorative schemes"⁶⁴ as well as the restoration of the first floor of the Tavern; work at the 1783 Benjamin Dulany house at 601 Duke Street for the noted preservationist Howard Joynt in 1945; and, work on the eighteenth century residence of W.H.S. Stevens, one of the more active preservationists in the city at 312 Queen Street in 1956. His preservation and restoration work was widely praised and summed up his contributions to the profession of architecture by stating: "Under his leadership, restoration of historic

⁶² See, Joseph M. Lasala, "The Life and Career of Milton LaTour Grigg, FAIA," School of Architecture, University of Virginia, unpublished mss., Fall 1990. Copy at Special Collections, Alexandria Public Library.

⁶³ "Restoring Monticello Gardens", editorial, AG, 9/15/1939, p.4.

⁶⁴ Dorothy H. Kabler, "Restoration of Gadsby's Wins Civic Support Over the Years, Work is Done by Patriotic Groups and Individuals", AG, 1/1/1951, p.2.

buildings was made a respectable endeavor for architects.”⁶⁵

When the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review was established in 1946, one of two positions on the Board for a “certified architect” was left open at the request of Paul Delaney, the City Councilman who introduced the ordinance. Delaney made the request because he expected that Grigg would be returning to Alexandria and could be appointed a member of the Board. However, Grigg never did re-establish a residence in Alexandria.

Grigg and his firm were prolific and efficient architects and the work ranged widely. However, he was nationally known as an ecclesiastical architect and designed a hundred or more churches nationwide. In the historic district of Alexandria he was responsible for the design of the Parish Halls for both Christ Church on North Washington Street (1950) and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church on South Pitt Street (1947).

Grigg was quite generous in sharing his knowledge of eighteenth and early nineteenth century architecture with the citizens of Alexandria and lectured on a number of occasions to such organizations as the Alexandria Association, the Alexandria Historical Society and local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.⁶⁶ Of course, Grigg’s generosity in this area was rewarded with the public’s knowledge of his work which paid dividends in commission referrals.

THOMAS TILESTON WATERMAN, 1900-1951

According to a recent article in the *Winterthur Portfolio*, Waterman “became involved in most of the key projects in the eastern seaboard states that affected buildings of the colonial period and the early Republic. His attitudes and opinions influenced many decisions bearing on the treatment or recording of historic American buildings.” He was one of the original architects for the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg beginning in 1928 and was responsible for the restoration or reconstruction of such buildings as the Governor’s Palace. His association with Williamsburg ended when the architectural office was disbanded in 1933. Shortly thereafter he joined the staff of the newly established Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) as assistant and then associate architect in the National Park Service. In that capacity he was responsible for the supervision of all drawings that emanated from the HABS offices. He remained with HABS until 1942. Beginning in the mid-1930s he was associated with the work of Henry Francis

⁶⁵ See, “The Making of a Profession, Ten Who Made a Difference”, *Inform*, v.5, no.3, pp. 24-25. Grigg entry by Roulhac Toledano.

⁶⁶ See, for example, “Milton Grigg Will Address Civic Group”, *AG*, 1/30/1947, p.1, and “John Alexander Chapter DAR Hears Talk on Historical Sites, Architect Milton Grigg Shows Slides of Many Virginia Shrines”, *AG*, 10/24/1947, p.16.

duPont and was largely responsible for the expansion of duPont's mansion and the creation of the Winterthur museum. He was the author of a number of influential architectural books including Domestic Colonial Architecture of Tidewater Virginia (1932) with John Barrows; Mansions of Virginia (1946); and, The Dwellings of Colonial America (1950).⁶⁷ Rebecca Ramsay Reese, one of the most prominent preservationists in the city, called Waterman "a great genius".⁶⁸

Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary

When Waterman began work at HABS he resided in Alexandria at 517 Cameron Street where he rented a room from Rebecca Ramsay Reese, the most active and well known preservationist in the city during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. While living in Alexandria, Waterman was responsible for a number of influential restoration projects including the facade and window restoration at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary at 105 and 107 South Fairfax Street in 1936-1938.⁶⁹ Waterman did succeed in creating one of the most visually distinctive facades in Alexandria. He also partially restored the early nineteenth century appearance of portions of the interior of the building. For his work on the building, Waterman received an architectural award from the Washington Board of Trade in 1940 which cited the project as "a successful effort to honestly restore a landmark of Alexandria to its original historical character."⁷⁰ Waterman was most generous to the Landmarks Society of Alexandria which owned the building and he provided his services gratis.

⁶⁷ Fay Campbell Kaynor, "Thomas Tileston Waterman, Student of American Colonial Architecture," Winterthur Portfolio, v. 20, nos. 2 & 3, Autumn 1985, p. 103. Hereafter, Kaynor, "Thomas Tileston Waterman." See also, Dorothy Holcombe Kabler, "Landmarks Society Pay Tribute to Thomas T. Waterman for Gifts of His Art in Restoration Work", AG, 1/30/1951, p.5.

⁶⁸ Diaries of Rebecca Ramsay Reese, Entry for January 21, 1951. Ramsay MMS Collection, Special Collections, Alexandria Library. Waterman's funeral at the National Cathedral was attended by a virtual who's who of leaders of the nascent historic preservation movement in the United States including Frederick Rath, the first Executive Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Helen Duprey Bullock, the Trust's first historian, David E. Finley, Chairman of the Board of the Trust and Director of the National Gallery of Art, Worth Bailey the Director of the Trust's Woodlawn Plantation and former curator of Mt. Vernon, and Delos H. Smith, an architect and early staff member of HABS and who had practiced with Waterman.

⁶⁹ Building Permit #2767, 9/19/1938. City of Alexandria Code Enforcement Bureau files; see also, Kaynor, "Thomas Tileston Waterman," p.137; "Historic Pharmacy Converted Into Museum by Local Society", AG, 4/28/1939, p.1.

⁷⁰ "Restoration of Pharmacy Brings Award, Landmark Society, Architect Honored for Apothecary Project", AG, 3/14/1940, p.1.